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ABSTRACT

This report describes 42,000 students attending community and technical colleges in Washington in 1995-96 who received need-based aid, including 29,000 aided students who received a state need grant. The need grant is intended to supplement other need based aid programs. The report compares student characteristics and student outcomes for non-aided and aided students including the need grant subset. Findings indicate that: (1) two of three aided students were the first in their family to attend college, with the typical student being an older, female, single parent and welfare recipient; (2) federal and state grants received by aided students met less than one-third of their estimated $8,955 in expenses (the need grant portion, $1,270 per award, met about 14 percent of need; (3) three-quarters of aided students were independent, meaning at least 24 years of age or otherwise not financially supported by parents; further, these students were 70% female and single parents; (4) dependent students comprised one-quarter of aided students and 18% of need grant students; (5) the main reason independent students attended college was for job training, while dependent students attended primarily for academic transfer; (6) a higher percentage of aided students earned vocational certificates and degrees than did non-aided students leaving vocational programs in 1995-96; (7) aided students attending for transfer had the same transfer rates as non-aided students; and (8) developmental education proved a sound investment for aided students, helping students perform college level work and persist in school. Contains 8 tables. (AS)

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Characteristics and Outcomes of Financial Aid Students

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

JC 990 309

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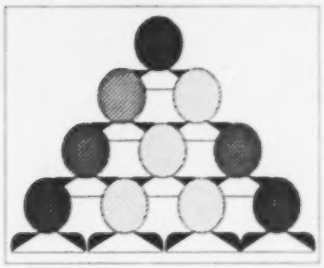

Research Report
No. 98-5

Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, Education Division

CHARACTERISTICS AND OUTCOMES OF FINANCIAL AID STUDENTS WITH A FOCUS ON STATE NEED GRANT RECIPIENTS

July 1998

Background

This report describes 42,000 students attending community and technical colleges in 1995-96 who received need based aid (aided students) with an additional focus on 29,000 aided students who received a state need grant. The purpose of the need grant is to supplement other need based aid programs. The report compares student characteristics and student outcomes for non-aided and aided students including the need grant subset.

Key findings were:

- Two of three aided students were the first in their family to attend college. The typical aided student was older and more likely to be female, a single parent and a welfare recipient. Need grant recipients were a little more likely than other aided students to have these characteristics of being first generation, female, single parents and older.

- Federal and state grants received by aided students met less than one third of their estimated $8,955 in expenses. The need grant portion ($1,270 per award) met about 14 percent of need.

- Three-quarters of aided students were independent students, so termed because they were 24 or older, or otherwise not dependent upon their parents for financial support. Eighty-two (82) percent of need grant students were independent students. Seven out of ten (70 percent) independent students were female, single parents and had the most likelihood for being welfare recipients.

- Dependent students, so termed because they were under 24 and supported by their parents, comprised about one-quarter of aided students and a little less than one in five (18 percent) need grant students. Fifty-seven (57) percent of these younger students were female; 29 percent were Asian and Pacific Island students of color, most of who were immigrants or refugees.

TC 490309

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- The main reason independent students attended college was training for work. The main reason dependent students attended college was academic transfer.

- A higher percentage of aided students earned vocational certificates and degrees than did non-aided students leaving vocational programs in 1995-96. Aided and non-aided graduates were employed at the same rate six to nine months after college. Aided students who left after some college, but not having graduated, were less likely to be employed than non-aided students who left without completing. The median hourly wages for aided graduates and non-completers were less than non-aided students. This was primarily due to different choices in training programs as aided students were more likely to enroll in low-wage programs. The difference implies more should be done in advising and supporting aided students to enroll and succeed in high wage training areas.

- Aided students attending for transfer had the same transfer rates as non-aided students through the fifth quarter after leaving community college. Their transfer rates were considered strong and will increase further as time elapses.

- Consistent with other research, developmental education proved a sound investment for aided students, helping students perform college-level work and persist in staying in college.

Conclusion

Need-based aid was important in helping first generation students attend community and technical colleges. The typical aided student was older, and more likely to be female, a single parent and a welfare recipient. Need grant students were even more likely to have these characteristics and to be at-risk students.

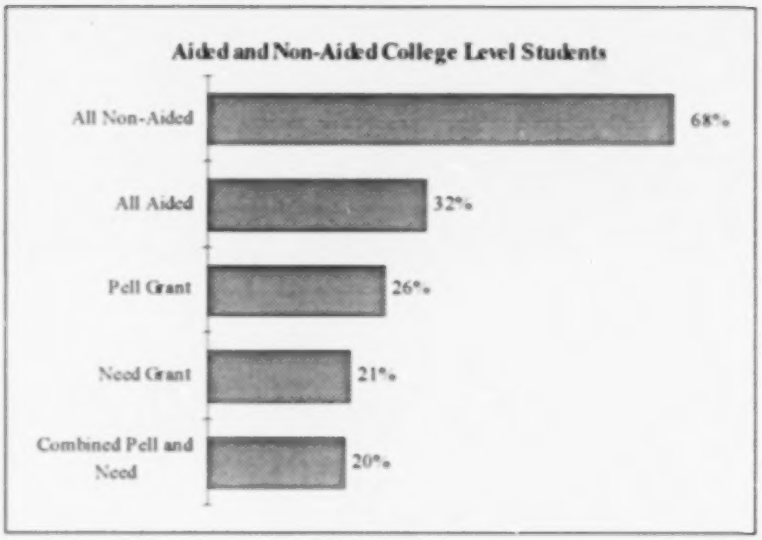
Eighty-two (82) percent of need grant students were independent students, so termed because they were 24 or older or not financially supported by their parents. Sixty-one (61) percent of these students attended two-year colleges for vocational preparation. They completed programs at a higher rate than non-aided students and the graduates found employment at the same rate as other non-aided graduates. However, more needs to be done for advising and supporting aided students in high wage training occupational areas to also improve their median hourly wages.

Dependent students, so termed because they were under 24 and received parental financial support, attended for college transfer. Their transfer rates and patterns were the same as non-aided transfer students and were considered strong for the short period in which they were measured.

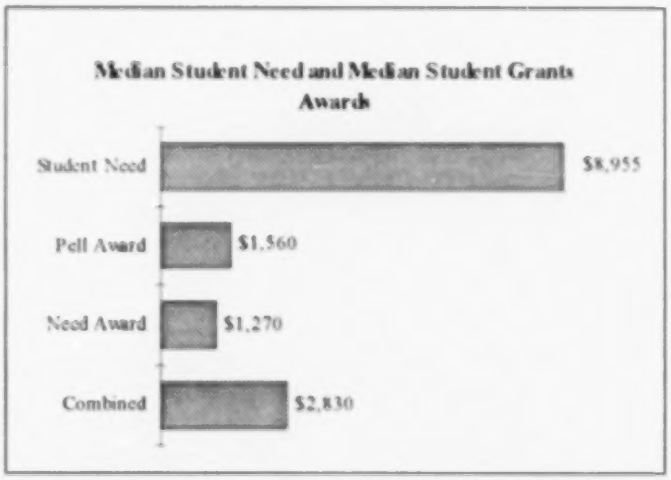
Finally, developmental education continued to be a sound investment for aided students as course-takers had the same retention rates as non-aided students and as non-course takers.

Analysis of Findings

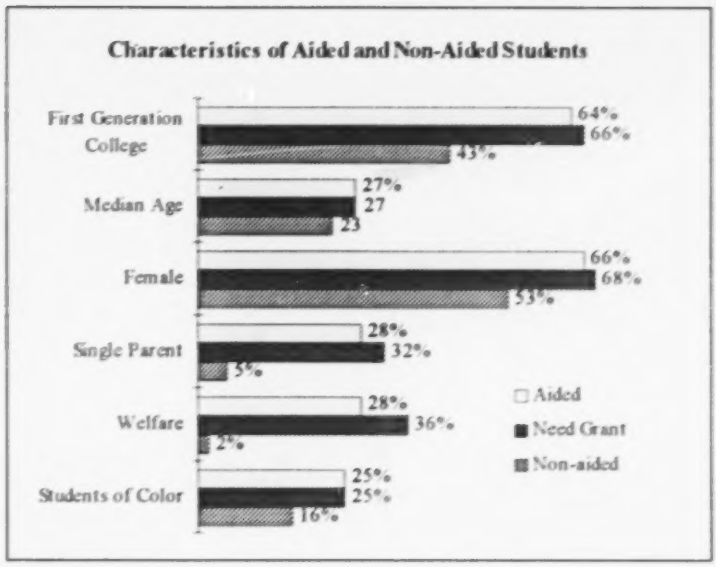
Percent of College Level Students Who Were Aided: About 131,000 community and technical college students were enrolled in college-level programs of study that were eligible for financial aid in 1995-96. Low income students who enroll in one or two courses to upgrade their skills were not eligible. Likewise, students enrolled in adult basic education and ESL were not eligible. A little less than one-third (32 percent) of students in eligible programs received need based aid. The federal Pell Grant was the largest aid program, reaching 26 percent of all college level students (and 82 percent of all aided students). The state need grant was the next largest program reaching 21 percent of all college level students (and 66 percent of all aided students). A third federal grant program was the Supplemental Equal Opportunity Grant (SEOG) (reaching 7 percent of all college-level students and 21 percent of all aided students). Twenty (20) percent of all college level students (63 percent of all aided students) received both a Pell and a need grant. Other forms of aid students received included: federal loans, federal and state work study and individual college support.



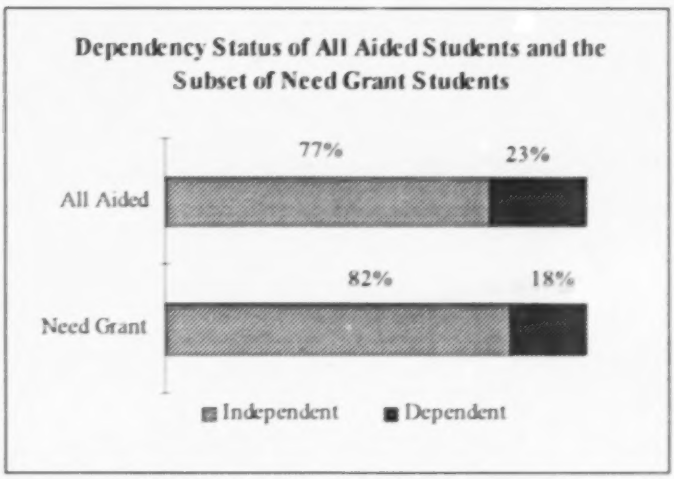
Percent of Need Met By Grants: A Pell and a need grant together met less than one-third (31 percent) of a student's calculated need for attending college. The median financial need demonstrated by need grant students in 1995-96 was $8,955 based upon a nine month college budget. The median need grant award was $1,270 (14 percent of need). This median award included a dependent care allowance for recipients with children in childcare. The median Pell grant award was $1,560 (17 percent of need). If a student also got a SEOG grant, an additional 3 percent of their financial need was met.



Characteristics of Aided Students: Need based aid and the state need grant increased the percentage of first generation students who attended community and technical colleges. Aided students were older than non-aided students and more likely to be female, single parents and welfare recipients. Aided students were also more likely to be students of color. Younger Asian and Pacific Islander students made up the largest group of students of color. Most of these younger students were immigrants and refugees.

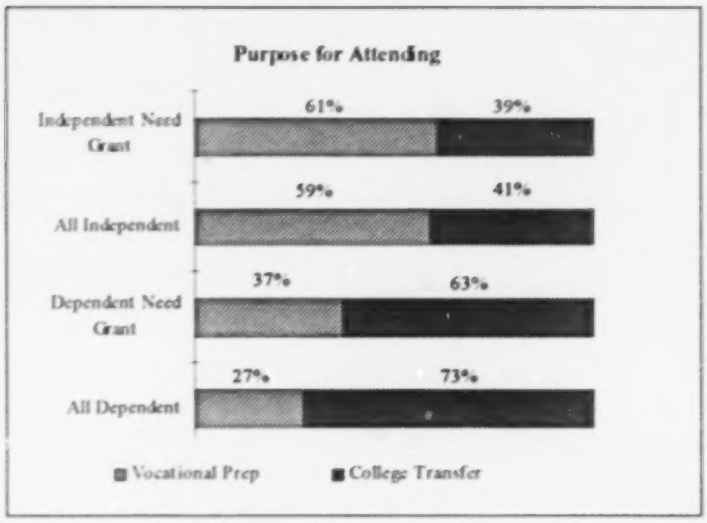


Dependency Status: Seventy-seven (77) percent of aided students were independent students, so termed because they were 24 or older, or not dependent upon parental financial support. Eighty-two (82) percent of need grant students were independent students. Independent students were more likely to be female (70 percent) and more likely to be single parents and welfare recipients.



Twenty-three (23) percent of aided students were dependent students, younger than 24 years old and supported by their parents. Dependent students were 57 percent female. Asian and Pacific Islander students comprised 29 percent of dependent students. Most of these students were immigrants and refugees.

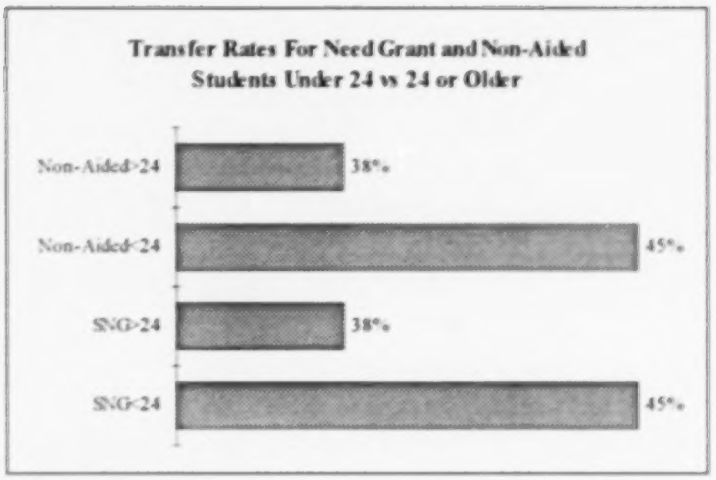
Purpose for Attending: Independent students were more focused on vocational preparation as their purpose for attending community and technical colleges. Dependent students were more focused on college transfer as their reason for attending college.



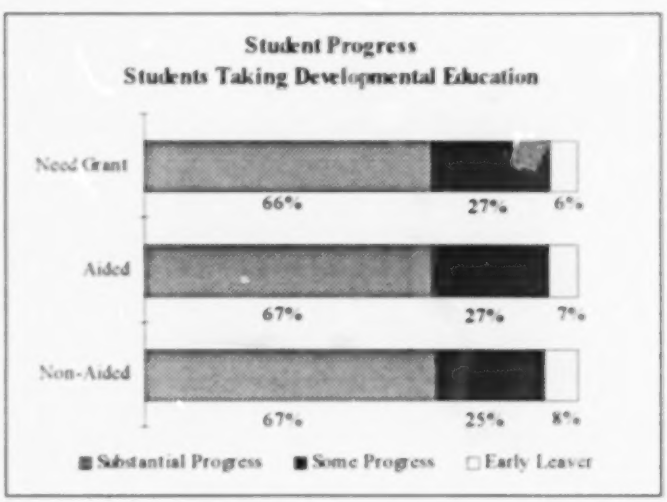
Educational and Employment Outcomes for Students Attending for Vocational Preparation: Aided students were more likely than non-aided students to complete vocational programs, earning a certificate or degree. Aided and non-aided graduates were employed at the same rate six to nine months after college. Aided students who took some courses, but did not complete programs, were less likely to be employed six to nine months after college than non-aided students. Also, the difference between employment rates for aided graduates and non-completers was greater than for non-aided students indicating that future employment hinged even more greatly on completion for aided students. Median hourly wages adjusted to 1997 dollars were lower for aided students as a whole and need grant students in particular. Differences in median hourly wages were primarily due to choice of programs as aided students, and in particular non-completers, were more likely to enroll in low wage occupational areas. This implies that more needs to be done for advising and supporting aided students to enroll in and complete in high wage areas.

	Non-aided	Aided	Difference Between Aided and Non-aided	Need Grant	Difference Between Aided and Non-aided
% Graduating	47%	55%	8%	55%	8%
Grads Employed	83%	83%	0%	83%	0%
Non-Completers Employed	77%	74%	-3%	73%	-4%
Grads Hrly Wage	$11.18	$10.01	-$1.17	$9.53	-$1.65
Non-Completers Hrly Wage	$10.25	$8.26	-$1.99	$7.77	-$2.48

Transfer to 4-Year Colleges: Transfer rates for all aided, need grant and non-aided students were the same when compared by age. Forty-five (45) percent of younger students transferred within five quarters of leaving a community college. Thirty-seven (37) percent of students 24 or older transferred in the same period. This is an early snapshot of transfer rates (five quarters after leaving college). Past experience suggests that rates will increase as more time elapses and more students in all groups make the transition to a 4 year college.



Developmental Education: Using fall quarter as a snapshot, 33 percent of aided students and 39 percent of need grant students enrolled in at least one developmental education course compared to 23 percent of non-aided college-level students in aid eligible programs. About two-thirds of all developmental education students attending for a degree were enrolled for four to seven quarters over a two year period (substantial progress); 66-67 percent were enrolled two to three quarters (some progress); and six to eight percent were enrolled only one quarter (early leavers). Student progress for developmental course takers and non-course takers was the same for all groups and was better than student progress made by students who did not take developmental education (58 percent of non-developmental education students made substantial progress; 27 percent some progress; and 15 percent were early leavers).



Conclusion

Need based aid was important in helping first generation students attend community and technical colleges. The typical aided student was older, more likely to be female, a single parent and a welfare recipient. Need grant students were even more likely to have these characteristics and to be at-risk students.

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Data sources for the analysis: SBCTC Data Warehouse; Outcomes Assessment Files, and 1995-96 Financial Aid Unit Records.